

Remarks

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1-12 and 14-23 are pending in the application, with claims 1, 3, 14 and 23 being the independent claims. Claim 13 is sought to be cancelled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. New claims 15-23 are sought to be added. The claims have been amended to bring them into conformity with U.S. claim drafting conventions. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested.

Applicants submit herewith a copy of the reply to the first Written Opinion of the International Preliminary Examination Authority dated July 19, 2004, with amendments, and a copy of the reply to the second Written Opinion of the International Preliminary Examination Authority dated October 13, 2004, with amendments. The present amendments are based on the amended claim set submitted in the reply to the second Written Opinion.

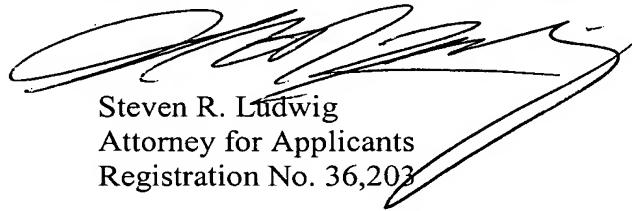
Support for the amendment to the claims, as well as for new claims 15-23, is found, *inter alia*, in the claims as previously presented.

Conclusion

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Preliminary Amendment is respectfully requested. Applicants believe the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Respectfully submitted,

STERNE, KESSLER, GOLDSTEIN & FOX P.L.L.C.



Steven R. Ludwig
Attorney for Applicants
Registration No. 36,203

Date: January 31, 2005

1100 New York Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005-3934
(202) 371-2600

357906-1